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U. S. Department of AgricultureFEEDING PUPPIES
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Practically speaking, the feeding of puppies begins long before the animals are born, and much of their individual excellence is determined by the way their dams have been fed and cared for before and during the gestation period. It is essential, therefore, to see that the ration of any bitch carrying young is rich in foods of muscle and bone-building character and ample in quantity. Lean meat, raw eggs, milk, boned-fish, meat broths, soups, and suitable vegetables (such as beets, carrots, and tomatoes) are of especial value for this purpose, the amount of food required being determined by the age, size, and condition of the bitch and the stage of pregnancy.

After the puppies have been whelped, the feed for at least the first three weeks of their lives is their mother's milk. The bitch's first milk, found after whelping, is called colostrum. It is an essential food for the newborn dog, and all puppies should receive this milk by early nursing.

At 3 to 4 weeks of age puppies should begin to learn to eat solid and semi-solid food. The transition from an all-liquid diet, obtained by nursing the dam, to one consisting of liquid, semi-solid, and solid foods should be gradual and, if begun early enough, it will be complete when the puppy is ready to wean. This is usually at the age of 6 weeks. For the purpose of teaching the young dog to become accustomed to food other than its mother's milk, it is a good plan at 3 weeks to begin feeding small amounts of ground, shredded, or well-minced lean meat (preferably beef), salmon, dry bread, dog or puppy biscuits moistened with milk, meat broth, or non-greasy gravies, and like foods daily. A puppy that has been taught to eat such things well before weaning will not be greatly affected by the separation from its mother at weaning time and should not go "off feed".

When feeding a young dog that has just been weaned, it is necessary to give a little food at a time and to feed the animal frequently. For a month or so after weaning, a puppy should be fed at least 5 times a day. The number of daily feedings may then be reduced as the animal grows older, while the amount of food given at each meal should be increased gradually. When young dogs reach the age of one year they may be fed once, twice, or three times daily, depending upon the requirements of the dogs and the desires of the owner.

For the weaned puppy, a ration made of the following foods is suggested: Well-minced, ground, or shredded lean beef, lamb, or mutton, slightly seasoned with salt; some vegetables of a non-starchy nature; meat substitutes, such as whole milk, eggs, boned-fish or salmon; and some cereal grains or products thereof. All these foods are not used at each meal, of course, but the day's ration should include considerable variety.

As a guide to compounding the ration of a dog receiving moderate exercise, a mixture of approximately 50 percent meat or its substitutes, 25 percent vegetables, and 25 percent cereal grains or products thereof has often proved satisfactory. Necessary feeding changes may be made after results have been observed.

Meat may be given to the puppy either raw or cooked, or its use can be varied from time to time. The best methods of cooking meat for dogs are boiling and broiling. When a good selection of meat is available, the lean cuts from the cheaper parts of the carcass, such as the chuck and neck pieces, are generally the most economical to use. A good way to feed eggs is to mix them raw with milk. They also may be fed in the coddled form. A slight cooking of the raw egg white causes coagulation and increases its digestibility.

When feeding meat, or in fact food of any kind, be sure that it is of good quality and entirely wholesome. Spoiled and moldy feed must never be given to dogs, as its use may cause either serious digestive disturbances or death.

The inclusion of some vegetable material in the puppy diet is usually essential and advisable. Vegetables provide necessary bulk, are valuable sources of vitamins and minerals, and act as body regulators. The vegetables most commonly used for feeding mature dogs are tomatoes, beets, carrots, cabbage, peas, and beans. Some of these are tolerated by some dogs and refused by others, so care should be taken to use only those which agree with puppies. Of the vegetables listed, perhaps tomatoes, carrots, and beets will be found most useful. Usually puppies should not be fed peas and beans, because they are hard to digest. Also, most dog fanciers and veterinarians do not advise the use of potatoes. Vegetables may be fed in either raw or cooked form, but, inasmuch as they are not generally relished, it frequently is necessary either to chop them fine and mix them thoroughly with the meat, or to grind or cook them with meat to prevent the dog from nosing them out of the feed and eating only the meat.

Dry bread, puppy or dog biscuits, and some of the dry prepared breakfast foods can be used for the cereal portion of the ration. With the young puppy it is usually advisable to break the bread or biscuits into relatively small pieces and to moisten such food with meat broth, gravy, milk, or even water. Do not feed the food in a sloppy condition, however. Wheat bread is usually the easiest to obtain and it is the kind most often fed. In feeding bread, especial care should be taken to see that it is neither moldy nor mildewed. If desired, the puppy or dog biscuits can be purchased in the broken form, either as a "meal" or as "kibbled" biscuit.

The quantity of feed required by a dog depends largely upon its size, condition, individuality, and age; the environment and climate; and the amount of exercise or work it receives. Because these factors are so variable, the owner or caretaker can best determine the correct quantity to give. In feeding a young dog, it is usually better to keep the animal just a trifle hungry than to allow it to gorge itself at any one meal and to refuse food at the next feeding period. It is necessary, of course, always to feed enough to keep the puppy in a thrifty, growing condition.

All feeding utensils should be kept thoroughly clean, and any uneaten food should be removed as soon as the puppy has satisfied its appetite. Observance of these points in management will help greatly in keeping the youngsters "on feed" and ready and eager for their next meal. A good supply of fresh, clean, cool water is always essential to proper growth and good health. Regularity of feeding is also a necessary part of good management. Where more than one puppy is fed, it is a good idea to provide individual dishes or pans to prevent the stronger dogs' robbing the weaker ones of food. And at feeding time it is wise to allow the dogs to eat their meals without undue interference or disturbance, otherwise animals may acquire surly or vicious dispositions.

In addition to the regular feed given a puppy, many dog owners have found it advisable to include a small quantity of cod-liver oil in the daily ration. To start, only a few drops should be given and then increased gradually up to one or more teaspoonfuls daily, depending on the needs of the animal. The use of cod-liver oil is generally most necessary during winter months and when the dogs are not allowed to run in the open where there is plenty of sunshine. Usually the cod-liver oil may be mixed with the food, as this simplifies feeding.

The advisability of feeding bones to puppies regularly is a debatable matter. There is perhaps no great harm in occasionally allowing dogs to gnaw the meat from large bones which will not splinter or lodge in the throat, as this facilitates digestion and helps in teething. There is no need, however, to allow bones to lie about after the dog has removed the meat. They frequently cause broken teeth and fights. The feeding of bones of a sharp or splintery nature, such as those from fish and poultry, should always be avoided, because they may either lodge in the throat or puncture the digestive organs and cause serious injuries or death. Some lamb bones, also, may cause trouble by lodging in the mouth or throat, so their use should be avoided.

If the dog is not in a thrifty condition, it is advisable to examine the droppings to see whether or not it is infested with worms. It is possible also that the dog is infested with external parasites. When a dog is known to be affected with internal parasites, or worms, it is necessary to give prompt treatment for them. Treatment for some internal and external parasites and parasitic diseases require the services of a qualified veterinarian. For information on the various parasites and parasitic diseases of dogs, consult U. S. Department of Agriculture Circular 338, "Parasites and Parasitic Diseases of Dogs".

